



# **Pre-IEP Prep 301: A Workbook for Students and Families**

**A workbook to promote strong voices, person-centered IEPs,  
and positive post-school outcomes**

**18-21-Year-Old Students**



**RUTGERS HEALTH**

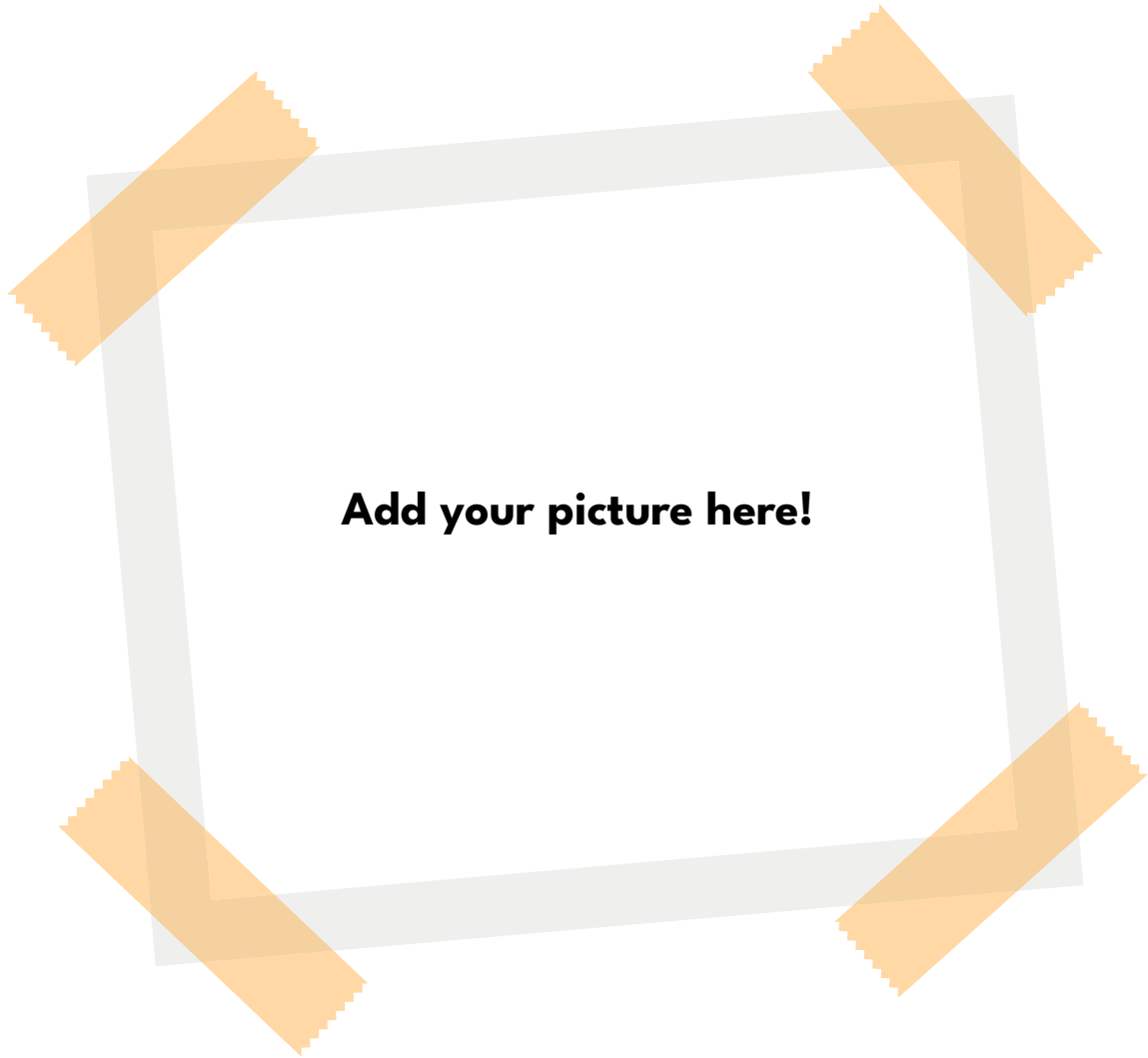
**The Boggs Center  
on Disability and Human Development**

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



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Office of Special Education, funded by IDEA Part B 2024-2025. May 2025.

# This book belongs to:



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**Name**

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**Date**

# Dear students and families,

This workbook was developed to support students and their families in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills to support each person to have a good life in their community.

Self-advocacy skills are essential for all people and having them helps people express their vision for the future and what they need to succeed.

## Directions:

This tool can be used in part or whole to help bring person-centered information into the transition to adult-life planning parts of your IEP. You can share this information before and during your IEP meeting.

For more information please visit the [New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy](#) webpage.

## More information about planning for adult life:

The [New Jersey Transition Toolkit](#) is designed to assist school staff and students with disabilities and their families in their efforts to prepare students with disabilities for entry into a successful adult life after high school. The work to prepare students for a successful adult life that is done by school staff, students, family members, agency staff, and others is referred to as “transition planning” and “transition services” since students are transitioning from school to adult life.



# Terms we use and what they mean:

**IEP:** The **Individualized Education Program** is designed to meet each eligible child's unique education needs and when appropriate, includes planning for a successful adult life.

**IEP Team:** Includes the parent, the student when appropriate, the case manager, teachers and other educators, and others as appropriate.

**DDD:** The **Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)** assures the opportunity for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive quality services and supports, participate meaningfully in their communities, and exercise their right to make choices.

**DVRS:** The **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)** works to enable eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities.

**Person-Centered Planning:** Is a holistic strength-based process that involves supporting people in making well-informed choices and identifying respectful supports.

**Self-Advocacy:** Being able to express to others what you want, what you need, and what you don't want.

**Self-Determination:** A process by which a person controls their own life.

**Modifications:** A modification changes what the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., the content of instruction).

**Accommodations:** An accommodation changes how the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., instructional methods used, support strategies, environmental factors, etc.).



# Understanding My IEP

Before you and your family are able to contribute to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) it is important to know what's in it. Work together to identify some key areas. For this activity have a copy of your most recent IEP. If you don't have one, request one from your case manager.

## What to look for:

1. Circle the **strengths, interests, and preferences** in your IEP.
2. Circle **modifications and accommodations** listed in your IEP.
3. Underline the “**Statement of Transition Planning**” and the “**Statement of Transition Services.**”
4. Put a star next to your “**Measurable Postsecondary Goals.**”



## Please answer these questions:

Has anything changed since your last IEP meeting that you want to put into your new IEP?

What are your new strengths, interests, or preferences since your last IEP?

Do any modifications and accommodations listed in your last IEP still help you? Is there anything you would like to add, remove, or modify?

What changes are needed to the information you found in the “Statement of Transition Planning” or “Statement of Transition Services”?

What would you like to add or change in your IEP (e.g., Measurable Postsecondary Goals, Annual Goals and Short-Term Objectives, etc.)?

What do you want to make sure gets discussed at your next IEP meeting?

# My Case Manager

## What does a case manager do?

A **case manager** is someone from your school who helps you, your parents, and your teachers put information together in your IEP. If you are having a difficult time in school or have questions about your education, you can talk to your case manager any time, not just at an IEP meeting.

**My case manager's name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My case manager's email is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My case manager's office is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the template below to write an email to say “hello” to your case manager and help them learn more about you and what you want for your future!**



New Message



To:

Subject: Hello!

Dear (insert case manager's name),

I am really excited to have your guidance as I plan for my future. Three words that describe me are: (insert 3 words).

Some of the things I really enjoy are: (list at least 2 things).

Some things I may need help with are: (list at least 2 things).

Some of my interests are: (list at least 2 things).

Thank you,  
(Your name)

Send

**Tip:** The case manager needs to know what is important to you and the hopes and dreams you have for your future. What do you see for your adult life?

# Building My Team

Speaking up for yourself and making big decisions is easier when you have someone you trust to help you. We call these people your **allies**! Different “allies” can support you in making different decisions.



For each question below, write down who you would want to help you in that situation.

**Who helps me make money decisions?**

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**Who helps me with medical/health decisions?**

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**Who helps me understand the support I receive?**

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**Who helps me with work?**

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**Who helps me make decisions about my education?**

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**Who helps me with activities of daily living, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing up?**

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**Who can help me navigate relationships and social situations?**

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## What is supported decision-making?



**Supported decision-making** is about helping people, regardless of age or ability, make their own decisions by using a variety of integrated supports, including other people they trust, technology, community supports, or paid supports.

You can find tools to explore supported decision-making through the LifeCourse Nexus:  
<https://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/exploring-the-life-domains/supported-decision-making/>

# Great Things about Me

Add your name to the name tag and a photo or image of yourself in the frame. In the spaces below, list all the great things that make you, you! These can include **skills, talents, strengths, compliments others give you, knowledge**, and any **special qualities** you have.


Great things about: 



\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

Skills & Talents	Strengths	Compliments from Others
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Knowledge	Special Qualities
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# Balancing Supports

## Directions:

List what makes a good “everyday” life for you under “**Important To Me.**” Who do you spend time with? What are you doing? Where are you going?

Under “**Supports I Need,**” share information that you want others to know about you or ways they can support you best. Think about different environments and situations such as in school, at work, at home, with friends, etc.



**Important to Me**



**Supports I Need**

# My Vision for the Future

List the things you want for your future (after graduation) in each of the categories below.



## Home life (Where will you live?)

## Employment

## Relationships

## Community & Recreation

*Where will you go in your community? What will you do for fun?*

## Education (adult learning)

## Transportation

# Action Plan for My Future

List the steps you have taken or will take in the next year towards the future you want.



## Home life

## Employment

## Relationships

## Community & Recreation

## Education

## Transportation

## Other

# What I Don't Want for the Future

List your “**deal breakers**” for your future. “**Deal breakers**” are things for your future that you would not accept.



**Tip:** Figuring out what you don't want for your future can be just as important as exploring what you do want. Consider sharing your responses with your case manager to avoid experiences that would put you on a path toward what you don't want.

# Community Mapping

This activity will help you and your allies understand your life right now and what you want for the future. Explore your community to learn more about the place you live. Make a list of places in your community that match your interests and vision for your future.



Here are a few questions to get you started:

**Where could you get a gym membership?**

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**Where is the closest emergency room/urgent care center for medical emergencies?**

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**Where would you go for food shopping?**

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**Where is your bank?**

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**Your List**



**Want to learn more about your community? Develop a Community Asset Map!** Use the “My Maps” feature in Google to develop a community asset map. You can find a video tutorial here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3toaUiBg0ys>

# For students and families

How do you feel about the upcoming IEP meeting?



What priority items (if any) would you like to focus on?

What can the IEP team do to make you feel *most* comfortable at the meeting?

Is there anything about your IEP, educational program, or anything else that you feel confused or unsure about?

Is there any information or resources that you need from the school or another agency such as DDD, DVRS, or the Center for Independent Living?

If you only had 2 minutes to tell educators what they needed to know about yourself/your child, what would you share?

**Tip:** Think about some ways that you can support your child and prepare them to attend the IEP meeting. Also consider sharing your responses to these questions with your case managers before the IEP meeting.

# References & Additional Resources

**Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)**

<https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/>

**New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/policy/index.shtml>

**New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)**

<https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/special-services/individuals-with-disabilities/>

**NJ Transition Toolkit**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/njtransition/>

**PCAST Webpage**

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/pcast.shtml>

**SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**

<https://spanadvocacy.org>

**The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development: *Transition to Adulthood for Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities: A Timeline for Parents***

<https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/transition-to-adulthood-timeline-for-parents>



## Special Thanks

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## Notes & Questions I Have:



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After piloting this tool, please  
provide feedback by scanning  
or clicking this QR code.